

Maurice Hinchey NEWS

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HINCHEY MEETS WITH HIGH-LEVEL ATSDR OFFICIALS; AGENCY COMMITS TO ASSISTING WITH ENDICOTT SITE

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (NY-22) today met in his Washington office with the Assistant Administrator of the federal Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry (ATSDR) and five other federal officials. During the meeting, ATSDR committed to assisting the New York State Department of Health (DOH) with the chemical spill site at the former IBM plant in Endicott.

"The serious nature of the situation in Endicott demands specific expertise in the health effects of exposure to hazardous substances," said Hinchey. "ATSDR can provide that expertise. The involvement of this agency will give area residents access to information that is superior in quantity and quality than would otherwise be possible."

ATSDR, a division of the Centers for Disease Control, is directed by congressional mandate to perform specific functions concerning the effect on public health of hazardous substances in the environment. These functions include public health assessments of waste sites, health consultations concerning specific hazardous substances, health surveillance and registries, response to emergency releases of hazardous substances, applied research in support of public health assessments, information development and dissemination, and education and training concerning hazardous substances.

Earlier this week, Hinchey succeeded in adding to a federal spending bill a sentence specifically making the Endicott site a priority for ATSDR. An underfunded agency, ATSDR would not easily be able to assist in Endicott without Hinchey's amendment.

Dr. Henry Falk, ATSDR Assistant Administrator, traveled from the agency's headquarters in Atlanta for today's meeting. Also attending were Toxicology Division Director Dr. Christopher De Rosa, Health Investigations Chief Dr. Alden Henderson, Technical Projects Officer Gregory Ulirsch, Associate Administrator Barbara Rogers, and Zeno St. Cyr, representing the Department of Health and Human Services Assistant Secretary for Legislation.

The ATSDR officials committed to providing financial and technical assistance to DOH. The federal agency will provide resources and expertise well beyond what the state agency currently has available to it. ATSDR's involvement will make it possible to conduct studies on the health effects of the spill that will be much more timely and detailed.